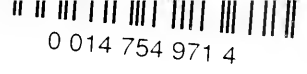


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THE NEWER WEST.

By RICHARD J. HINTON.

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THE NEWER WEST.

FROM the Missouri River, anywhere between Leavenworth and Sioux City, to the Pacific Ocean, a bird's flight, however direct, would cover more than 1,400 miles of territory. From the British dominions to the Gulf of Mexico, on a course marked southward from Pembina upon the Manitoba line, our aerial messenger would also traverse 1,400 miles. When the writer first crossed the Missouri River, early in 1856, this vast region was almost a solitude, practically unknown even to geographers. A considerable portion of it appeared on their maps as the "American Desert." Eastward, the nearest railroad points were Iowa City and Jefferson City, both not less than 200 miles away. Westward, California had some 26 miles of railroad, and it was several years before this lengthened out to 31 miles. It was still nearly two years before the telegraph crossed the Missouri and moved on westward. The pony express was evolved during the next year; the first overland mail had been received but a year before. From the Red River to the Gulf, and from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean, there would not have been found a total American white population of over 150,000. The whole number of persons inhabiting the region in the summer of 1856 could not have exceeded 450,000. The Indians would have numbered 200,000. The hybrid Mexican population found in south-western Texas and New Mexico, then including Arizona and a considerable portion of southern Colorado, was about 100,000 strong. The whites were found in largest numbers in California, in Oregon, in Missouri west of the river, and in south-western Texas; 25,000 were in the newly-organized Territories of Nebraska and Kansas.

A few days before this article was begun, the writer returned from an extended journey (made on public business) through the same region—the latest of many which he has made under all sorts of conditions during the intervening years. This one

covered more than 14,000 miles, of which all but a few score were traversed in well-appointed railroad cars. The work undertaken was one which enabled all those engaged in it to obtain an excellent insight into the economic conditions, the social aspects, and the public feeling of all the States and Territories of the far West. It gave extended opportunity for a study of the changes that have occurred. The official purpose of the journey had reference only to the region beyond the 98th meridian of longitude west of Greenwich. Eighteen States and Territories were visited and traversed. The contrasts offered by this region to the solitude of 1865 were almost amazing. West of the meridian named there are now at least 22,000 miles of railroad, and of telegraph wires not less than 150,000 miles. Of telephone and electric-light cables, in proportion to population, there are more miles in use than elsewhere within the United States. There is to-day more property owned *per capita* than elsewhere on the continent. Two fifths of the national domain is found west of the line given, and certainly three fifths of the remaining public lands of the United States must be sought for in the same region; and that, too, without considering Alaska. Yet how few persons are cognizant of the fact that, east and west, the geographical center of this Union is somewhere in the Bay of San Francisco; for with the Aleutian Islanders flying our flag within 50 miles of the Siberian coast of Asia, our domain extends, on a north-western and south-eastern line, some 3,000 miles beyond the Golden Gate.

Returning, however, to the solid earth, and eschewing what seems hyperbole, the region between St. Paul, Great Bend, Fort Worth, and the Gulf, on the east, and the Rio Grande, San Diego, and Tacoma, on the west, contains at this writing a population of about 5,000,000. It may support, under conditions that are realizable, a population of 100,000,000. This statement is made with full knowledge of the contemptuous sneers it will evoke from the learned ignorant and the unthinking sciolists who accept opinions and form conclusions at second hand.

This newer West had eight senators in the last Congress, and the same number of representatives. Four new States have been recently admitted; there are now sixteen senators and thirteen

representatives. Four additional senators and two additional representatives, from Idaho and Wyoming, will be seated before the present session of Congress shall adjourn. Kansas, Nebraska, and Texas, with six more senators and twenty-two representatives, are immediately concerned with the fortunes of the region under consideration, for at least one third of each of those States lies west of the line laid down as our eastern starting point. It may be safely assumed, then, that if there are sectional and special interests to be legislatively considered, the region indicated will have, as now organized, the support in Congress of at least twenty-four senators and from twenty-seven to thirty-eight representatives. It needs no deep research in the history of politics to establish the formidable possibilities of such a combined vote.

After more than fifty days of constant observation and inquiry, one may well be asked for the most salient fact the journey impressed on those who participated. That question seems easy to answer, and yet when the reply comes to be expressed, there is difficulty in making clear and plain what is felt. But the marvelous change in the character of pioneer life, belongings, and conditions is the one overwhelming fact. To think of towns springing up almost as if overnight; to see comfortable farm houses scattered widely over a new land whose sod was but the previous year, perhaps, turned up for the first time; to see the railroad pushing into, crossing, and conquering the wilderness; to ride, as in one instance we did, through a long mountain tunnel lighted by electricity; to watch from car windows, as we sped in the clear darkness of a California night, the electric lamps that shone over city, town, farm, village, and fruit colony, glowing like stars hung in mid ether; to see the bare brown of the desert transformed into the emerald verdure of vineyard and orange grove; to hear the hum of busy port, of mining town, or lumber camp; more than all, to take note of the intelligence of the bright and brainy young thousands whom everywhere we met—these were impressive experiences indeed. The new population of the newer West is the most marvelous of all its striking features. It would seem in the Dakotas, in Montana, Idaho, and Washington, in the basin region, on the great plains to the center and southward, among the foot hills of the Rockies

and the Sierras, as well as along the coast from Puget Sound to San Diego, as if a draft had been made upon the central States and the old North-west for their younger men and women. There was nothing rustic or unusual either in their dress or ways, and that was not the least of the changes observed. Even the cowboy disappears. There is little of such pioneer life as characterized the "fifties." No less striking is another fact, namely, that there are to be seen but faint traces of the rude life of the old mining camp, or of the louder and coarser vulgarity and license of that carnival of vice and crime which was so marked a feature of the "railroad front" 20 or 25 years ago. The shrill cry of "Keno!" may yet be heard on the streets of some mountain town, as the tourist passes the open or swinging door of a miners' "hell"; but even in such centers of coarse masculinity the echoes grow feebler, and civilization is assuming a show of virtue, "even if it hath it not." The newer North-west is remarkable for its rapid growth in the amenities as well in the solid externals of material advancement.

One momentous fact must be taken into account first of all, in considering the social-economic forces that are developing within the newer West. The same period which covers the writer's observation of this region, comprises also the culmination of a struggle whose political and social conditions were all controlled by a single series of economic facts. Chattel slavery was made valuable, as such, by the fact that for the period of its dominance cotton was king. Conditions in that case were forced and artificial. In the suggestions about to be made as to a possible regional policy, the fundamental conditions are natural, not artificial; the primary factors are physical—indeed, almost cosmical in character. Economics lie behind all politics. They dominate philosophies and inspire ethical ideals, yet are always themselves the outcome of natural forces and physical conditions.

The newer West preëminently illustrates this. Its physical geography, though vastly diversified in details, is still a stupendous unit. Man may enormously modify the earth's surface by persistent activities, but when they cease, the ameliorations are effaced, and the original physical conditions become again dominant. How often, too, under the best conditions, do they force a

stern recognition of their supremacy! Mountain ranges may be passed or surmounted by man; they have never yet been lowered or removed. The arid interiors, with their basin-like beds of ancient seas or lakes, may be made in some degree subservient to the demands of industry. Across the great plains natural rivers will not run again, at least without the presence of earth-shaping catastrophe. Similar forces must come into play if the now dry belts of mountain streams and the basins of extinct lakes on plateau, range, and table land are ever again to be filled with water. The newer West is mastered by its sublime physical features. These, therefore, must shape its policy and control its relations, integrally, with the rest of the American Union. The chief factor, indeed the dominating one, is that of aridity.

"The arid West" is not a misnomer. From $97^{\circ} 30'$ to the 100th meridian, the sub-humid area east of the Rocky Mountains is well defined. From the 100th to the 126th meridian of west longitude across the continent, with the exception of the north-western section, where the limit is the 124th meridian, as far south as the northern boundary of California, the entire region is an arid one. Within the whole of it, water must be artificially applied to the soil, otherwise fertile, if agriculture and horticulture are to be in any wise successful pursuits. Even the raising of cattle and sheep is limited by this condition of aridity. There are not a thousand miles of navigable waters in the whole region. The rainfall ranges from 2 inches annually in the extreme south-west, to about 20 inches in the farther north-west. Across the continent direct from east to west, the range will be variable from 20 inches annually in the eastern sub-humid area, to about 18 on the plains beyond the 100th meridian; falling thence to 15 inches in the foot-hills, and to 8 or 9 in the basin region; rising again to 16 and 18, or even 24 inches in some localities, as the mountain depressions admit the influence of the Kuro Shiwo, the arctic current, or the trade winds that blow steadily for at least six months in the year from the Pacific Ocean. Another controlling factor in the future development of the newer West is found in a physical or climatic condition, which, broadly stated, is this: on the mountain ranges everywhere throughout its whole extent, the precipitation (rain and

snow) is always from three to five times the number of inches per annum that is recorded as falling on the plains, table lands, valleys, and basins below.

The importance of these facts may be understood more clearly when it is recalled that a precipitation of 28 inches is considered essential to agricultural security. Under irrigation it may fairly be assumed that not over one half of that amount of moisture is essential. The difference lies in the fact that under artificial conditions the application of water to the soil is always made when the same is most needed. The precious eight weeks or so, in which the agriculturist of the far West sees his harvest made or ruined, are exactly those in which the rainfall is most uncertain or entirely wanting. The lack of showers during six weeks of July and August will reduce the wheat crop of the Dakotas by at least one half.

The problems, then, of uncertain rain, nay, of almost complete aridity, are to be solved by permanent storm and flood storage works on a large scale adapted to regional conditions; and this solution can be reached only through the interposition of the whole nation. This statement is of course disputable for constitutional expounders, but facts and the logic of events are all in favor of it. The later highways of the land were unwittingly surrendered to private control, but the safety of the commonwealth is requiring, step by step, the reassumption of its sovereignty over the public function of transportation. Opposition was for years steadily made to appropriations for the improvement of rivers and harbors. All sorts of legal fictions are invented to remove constitutional scruples. It is asserted, and truly, that constitutionally the general government may not exercise police powers; for example, where the State powers are legally paramount. Yet when it was sought to make a national park on the Straits of Mackinaw, at the Sault Ste. Marie, the object was easily obtained, in the face of the non-objecting State and municipal rights of Michigan, by styling the same a military reservation. In like manner, when it shall seem advisable for the general government to undertake the work of reclaiming arid lands, a way will surely be found of reconciling that action with the letter and the spirit of the Constitution.

So essential to the newer West is the matter of water-storage on a scale commensurate with the area, that the demand therefor will most certainly shape and give form to all of its public affairs and legislative discussion and action. The sources of the great rivers—the Missouri, the Upper Mississippi, the Columbia, the Colorado, and others—still largely remain as national property. It will become a regional question whether they must so continue. The gravest problems of water-appropriation as well as of water-storage confront the several communities west of the 100th meridian. A glance at the map will show the truth of this. Inter-State appropriations of water cannot be solved by any tribunals other than those that Congress may organize, or by the United States Supreme Court. Artificial political lines must be ignored by the projecting and constructing engineers. They work under unchangeable physical features. The lines of a drainage basin existed before any State was bounded, and will remain after existing State boundaries shall have been forgotten. In the arid West it will be found that the people are not afraid of coöperative government, or opposed to the development of administrative supervision in the directions suggested.

An examination of the Constitutions of the States of Washington, Montana, and North Dakota shows some notable facts. In each of them, as well as in the Constitutions adopted for statehood purposes by the people of Wyoming, Idaho, and New Mexico, are to be found the most stringent provisions yet framed for the control of transportation companies and other corporations whose franchises cover economic functions concerned with the conveniences of the community—as coal-mining, gas and other light supply, street tramways, etc. The community asserts its power of control in the most unmistakable manner. In the same spirit also do these young commonwealths deal with the supply and distribution of water. Like Colorado and California, they declare all natural water supplies within their borders to be public property and under the control of the States. They declare that such water may not be used except for beneficial purposes. Those who for private profit build ditches, in order to bring the waters to the thirsty soil, are in law esteemed only as common carriers, entitled to compensation for the service ren-

dered, and no more. The use of land for water-storage purposes and for right of way is considered a public right; condemnation under eminent domain for such use must follow. Everywhere the tendency in the older irrigable sections is distinctly up to and even beyond State supervision and regulation of water-usage, and to community ownership of water ways and works. There still remains profit, large profit, for the capitalist in the present construction and rapid sale of irrigation works. But those who expect to hold such works as a permanent source of rent, reckon without their host. The water is public property, and communities that require it to make their land useful will surely become the owners of all the works and ways by which it is to be applied where needed.

In forecasting, then, the growth of a distinct policy shaping fresh demands for this newer West, I am first confronted by the overwhelming physical geography of the region; secondly, by the one supreme condition that it creates—aridity; thirdly, by the fact that it is impossible to achieve full reclamation of the desert without concurrent and continued control over the sources of the waters, first by the nation, next by the States affected acting with it, and finally by the local communities into which the States are subdivided. Private ownership of water is already set aside. Private appropriation thereof is already modified by public control of a deficient supply. Private and corporate rental of water is subject to State and county regulation of rates. Private ownership of water works and ditches will soon be a thing of the past. The needs which have already created the beginnings of these policies and purposes will, as fast as the newer West reaches the fullness of statehood, find their counterpart in strenuous demands upon the nation for aid in constructing the greater works needed in a vast system of water-storage and flood-control, such as is certain to be inaugurated. With this, it will be found that a general control of our remaining forest region and timber areas will be demanded by the same physical conditions which must make the newer West a practical unit, both in configuration and in the social-economic forces that will be thereby created and evolved. The railroads beyond the Missouri have already shown their submission to the same controlling law.

Their construction and administration have been carried forward on an immense scale. Unity along the latitudes they serve is absolute; as absolute will be the demand in the newer West for their public ownership. There being no possibility of competition—for there are no navigable water ways—the combination of forces is such as to drive forward the problem of general control.

Though the dominating factors have now been indicated, the brief list does not include all the economic forces and physical facts which must determine the regional necessities of the newer West. Irrigation and reclamation, though supreme, are not the only factors that must be considered; mining and pastoral life and enterprises must also be taken into account. They will both have their say, especially the first named. Mining for the precious metals has already made of the newer West a powerful instrumentality in the making of modern history. It is fast becoming a systematized, scientific pursuit. Even prospecting is being organized. With irrigation from the stored waters of the mining West, the farm will soon be alongside the mine, and the prospector will no longer be at the mercy of the middle man for the necessities of life. The mining interests of the newer West are sure to be found in the arena of financial politics, fighting for the metal which eastern preponderance has condemned. It will surely startle some complacent monometallists to realize that the stronghold of the bimetallists will be found in the United States Senate. The eight senators from the newly-admitted States are unquestionably radical bimetallists. The three Territories which stand with constitutions in hand awaiting statehood, will give six more senators to the same column. It may with safety be assumed that all the States west of the Mississippi will present an unbroken front for the free coinage of silver. They now number thirty-two senators, and with the three Territories asking admission from Congress, they will soon be thirty-eight—more than two fifths of the body as it will then be constituted.

The newer West, if it can have no interior water traffic, will nevertheless have—indeed already has—a commercial position of vast importance. Years since, a great Russian publicist, Alexander Herven, wrote of the Pacific Ocean as destined to be the new world's Mediterranean. It was pointed out that

nearly one half of the globe's inhabitants were on the Asian side thereof, and were therefore its commercial tributaries. The American shores of the Pacific are to be first considered in all forecasts of commercial progress and power. The people who are making Puget Sound alive with their activities, are surely bound to grasp the traffic of the North Pacific. The men of the Oregon and California coast are not likely to be limited in their industrial ambitions. One of their "captains" holds the Sandwich Islands in his hands, and Samoa will yet, despite the triple protectorate, fall easily under American control—not necessarily governmental, however. No matter what action British or Canadian statesmen may take, and however vast the sums they expend, it will soon be seen in our national councils that the newer West will demand, and that its growing business activity will compel, the absorption, not only of the whole coast from Washington to Alaska, but of at least the north-western portion of the Dominion. British Columbia and all the rest east to Winnipeg will ere long be looking toward a continental union. The same law of physical unity which has been considered as immediately affecting the newer West and its internal polity, must control in the extension of our Republic to the north-west. The peninsula of Lower California will finally follow the same directive impulse.

RICHARD J. HINTON.

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